

Copy to Dr. Lederberg

May 6, 1969

Congressman Pete McCloskey  
Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. McCloskey:

I was very interested in your recently distributed report of legislation which you have sponsored during this session. I would in particular like to offer you my heartfelt support in your efforts to end the war in Viet Nam and to further the conservation of our natural resources and in particular prevent the filling of the San Francisco Bay. I would also like to add my support for your opposition for the proposed ABM program which seems to me to be a completely unnecessary bolstering of the United States' already strong defensive position at the same time & seriously distorting the governments relative outlay in defense programs as opposed to socially relevant programs within the United States. At the same time I would like to urge you to oppose the program to develop the SST. I cannot understand the rationale behind putting so much money into a program designed to help so few people (including incidentally myself) to fly across the states every now and then, Again also at the risk of terrible inconvenience to those people who unfortunately to lie in the flight path of the proposed plane.

When recently you came to Ladera to talk with those of us living in the area, you mentioned that you liked from time to time to receive information from those people who had special knowledge in certain areas. I would like to respond to your suggestions with reference to legislation you mentioned aimed at limiting the categories of census questions punishable by fine for refusal to answer. I have been concerned for some time that the increasingly frequent attacks on the census bureau mainly in relation to the impending 1970 decennial census. I am, of course, keenly aware of the problems of maintaining strict confidentiality with such types of data and the fear that large scale data of this sort could readily be abused if it got into improper hands. On the other hand, I am equally and in fact much more greatly concerned with problems that would arise if we did not have access to the sort of data which the census is able to collect. This data, as I am sure you are aware, provides the

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essential foundations for many predictions in relation to social and educational programs. I believe that any attempt to limit the compulsory categories of questions asked by the census would seriously diminish the value and accuracy of census data and so at the same time might seriously impair planning for future social legislation. I have, together with Joshua Lederberg been involved in collaborative studies of census data with the Census Bureau. In these contacts I have always been impressed with the great integrity of the Census Bureau personnel and with their extreme sensitivity to the question of the confidentiality of the census data. In fact, very elaborate precautions were taken with respect to our having access to certain types of data in order, precisely, to protect this confidentiality. It is my belief that the measures taken by the Bureau are more than adequate at the present time to prevent any abuse of the information which they collect. The main emphasis of the studies which I have been involved in has been to see what information of a genetic nature could be provided by census data. I enclose for your possible interest, some reprints describing this and related work which I have done in the general area which is sometimes called "Genetic Demography". As you will see, accurate demographic data can be used to predict even in the genetic area for example with respect to possible trends in the frequency of schizophrenics or of individuals affected by Down's Syndrome (mongolism). It is my conviction, in fact, that a great deal more emphasis should be placed on the collection of data with the family as a unit, not so much with respect to its genetic utility as with respect to the increased opportunity that this would provide in making accurate projections, for example in the educational area and future needs for medical planning. A great deal of time, effort and money is apparently spent by the Defense Department in constructing models that help planning expenditure in defense programs. I wish that an equal effort could go toward planning in the area of social relevant legislation.

I would indeed be glad to discuss any of these points further with you if you so wish.

Yours sincerely,

Walter F. Bodmer  
Professor

WFB/jd  
enc.